

EXPRESS MAIL NO.: EV355035342US

APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES PATENT

Applicant: Dale Haslem; Ken Lee

Title: PLASTIC SLAB BOLSTER UPPER

Assignee: Aztec Concrete Accessories, Inc.

David W. Dorton
Wood, Herron & Evans, L.L.P.
2700 Carew Tower
441 Vine Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
(513) 241-2324 (voice)
(513) 421-7269 (facsimile)
Our Ref.: DBZ-373P2DV

SPECIFICATION

PLASTIC SLAB BOLSTER UPPER

Background of the Invention

In reinforced concrete construction, it is necessary to support the reinforcing bars ("rebars") in their designated locations during placement of the concrete and thereafter as it cures. This is accomplished in its most rudimentary form by simply resting the rebar on pieces of concrete placed on the form surface. Obviously, this approach may be unsatisfactory for many reasons, such as the lack of any means for fixing the rebar at their designed positions, as a result of which the rebar may be displaced as the concrete is poured.

In response to the shortcomings of this method of supporting rebar, welded wire supports have been developed and are used extensively in the reinforced concrete construction industry. For example, U.S. Patent No. 4,689,867 is directed to a welded wire rebar of one type, while U.S. Patent No. 4,996,816 describes another

welded wire rebar support design. With metal supports, however, there is a potential problem of corrosion. Coating the wire with epoxy is a method of dealing with this problem, but coating is expensive, and if the coating is damaged, corrosion may still occur.

5 Plastic supports are generally non-corrodible and therefore overcome the problems noted above with welded wire supports, but they usually lack the open construction provided by wire supports that permits full flow of concrete through and around the support during concrete placement. While U.S. Patents No. 5,729,949 and 6,089,522 disclose supports that may be formed of plastic and have openings formed in
10 them to facilitate concrete placement, the supports shown in these patents are individual units as opposed to supports that may extend for several spans. U.S. Patent No. 5,664,390 discloses a plastic bolster that may extend across several spans and uses a pair of spaced legs and a control body that resists deformation through the use of pin-like projections that bite into the underlying surface.

15 **Summary of the Invention**

The above-noted problems associated with prior art bolsters are obviated by the bolster of the present invention. Specifically, the bolster of the present invention is preferably molded of non-corrodible plastic, is of inverted T-shape for greater stability, and provides an open construction that facilitates distribution of concrete
20 during placement through and around the bolster.

The base of the bolster of the present invention may be molded integrally with the rebar support section that projects substantially perpendicularly away from an upper surface of the base and terminates in a rebar-engaging cap that extends in generally parallel relationship to the base. Both the base and the support section may be

of truss-like construction, which results in a high weight-to-strength ratio, with a major portion of the base and web being occupied by voids, thereby enhancing concrete flow through and around the bolster.

In another preferred embodiment of the invention, the base may be
5 molded with a series of posts spaced along and projecting from an upper surface and a rebar-engaging cap molded separately and mechanically interconnected to outer ends of the posts by means of joint elements molded in the posts and the cap. The latter may also be provided with transverse ridges on its outer rebar-engaging surface to break up shear planes. Additionally, the junctures of the posts and the base are strengthened by
10 gussets that project upwardly from the base and extend both longitudinally and laterally of the base upper surface. To further strengthen the bolster, opposite longitudinal edges of the base are provided with continuous upstanding ribs, and the ribs and gussets further serve to break up shear planes.

The post construction of this embodiment is conducive to flexible
15 injection mold tolling that can mold a wide range of sizes without the need for different molds for each size. The portions of the mold that forms the posts are simply adjusted.

The bolster of the present invention may be utilized separately, or in a preferred form of the invention, may be provided with complementary buckles at opposite ends to permit connection with like units to form a continuous bolster of
20 desired length. In this regard, both the base and the rebar support section are each provided with complementary buckles so that the units, when interconnected, are joined at both their upper and lower extremities, thereby enhancing the strength and stability of the composite bolster.

In either case, that is, whether formed as discrete units or with
25 interconnecting buckles, the bolsters are formed of a convenient length, e.g., about 2.5

feet in length. The inverted T-shape of the units, which permits the units to be nested, and the convenient unit length, greatly facilitate packaging the units for shipment.

The bolsters of the present invention may be formed from a variety of plastics, such as polycarbonate/ABS, polypropylene, nylon, or ABS. Additionally, the plastic may be reinforced with a variety of fibers, such as fiberglass, Kevlar, carbon fibers, or metal fibers.

These and other features and advantages of the bolster of the present invention will become more apparent from the following description.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention and, together with a general description of the invention given above, and the detailed description given below, serve to explain the invention.

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a slab bolster upper in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a plurality of slab bolster uppers nested for shipping;

FIG. 3 is a view similar to FIG. 1 of a second preferred embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 4 is an exploded perspective view of another preferred embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the embodiment of FIG. 4 showing the slab bolster upper assembled;

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of two units of the type shown in FIG. 5 interconnected by complementary buckles;

FIG. 7 is an enlarged perspective view showing the buckle construction at one end of the slab bolster upper;

FIG. 8 is a view similar to FIG. 7, but showing the buckle construction at the opposite end of a slab bolster upper;

5 FIG. 9 is a view similar to FIG. 6, but showing a second preferred embodiment of buckle;

FIG. 10 is an enlarged perspective view showing the complementary buckle of FIG. 9 with the components disengaged;

10 FIG. 11 is a view similar to FIG. 10, but showing the complementary buckle components engaged;

FIG. 12 shows the slab bolster upper of FIG. 5 embedded in a reinforced concrete structure; and

FIG. 13 is a view taken on line 13-13 of FIG. 12.

Detailed Description

15 With reference to FIG. 1 of the drawings, a slab bolster upper 10 in accordance with the first preferred embodiment of the invention comprises an elongated base 12 having upper and lower surfaces 14 and 16, respectively and an elongated rebar support section 18 connected to and projecting from the upper surface of the base for engaging and supporting reinforcing bars. As will readily be seen from FIG. 1, the base
20 12 has a truss-like construction comprising a series of struts 20 extending between spaced parallel outer edges 22 and a medial portion 24. Upstanding ribs 26 extend longitudinally of said base at said outer edges 22 and project substantially perpendicularly upwardly from the upper surface 14 of the base 12. The rebar support section 18 is formed as a substantially planar web projecting substantially

perpendicularly from the upper surface 14 of the base 12 substantially medially thereof. Similarly to the base 12, the rebar support section 18 comprises a series of struts 30 to provide a strong, yet open, truss-like configuration extending from a bottom, longitudinally extending lower rib 32 to a corresponding upper rib 34. Attached to the upper rib and extending substantially parallel to the base 12 is a rebar-engaging cap 36.

The slab bolster upper as shown in FIG. 1 may be injection molded from a suitable plastic such as polycarbonate, polypropylene, and nylon and may be reinforced from various fibers, such as fiberglass, carbon fiber, and metal fibers.

Additionally, it will be noted that with the truss-like construction of both the base and the rebar support section, the voids 40 and 42 through the base 12 and support section 18, respectively, comprise a major portion of the base and support section, whereby concrete, during placement, may flow freely through and around the base and the support section. Preferably, the openings 40 and 42 are made sufficiently large to permit the flow of sizable aggregate of up to 1.5 inches through the base and support section.

Turning to FIG. 2 of the drawings, a plurality of the slab bolster uppers 10 of FIG. 1 are shown nested in a compact configuration to facilitate shipment. Thus, the inverted T-shape of the slab bolster uppers permits them to be assembled in nested relation as shown in FIG. 2, and that, together with a convenient length of the units, for example on the order of 2.5 feet each, render the slab bolster uppers of the present invention readily adapted for shipment.

FIG. 3 of the drawings shows a second preferred embodiment 50 of the present invention, including a base 52 having a lower surface 54 and an upper surface 56 from which projects upwardly a rebar support section 58. The base 52 has upstanding ribs 60 projecting substantially perpendicularly from the upper surface 56

and extending along opposite edges 52. The rebar support section 58 has a substantially planar web 62 and a longitudinally extending cap 64 which extends in substantially parallel relationship to the base 52. Both the base and the rebar support section are provided with large voids, 66 in the base and 68 in the rebar support section, which, as seen in FIG. 3, comprise a major portion of the base and the rebar support section, and as in the embodiment of FIG. 1, facilitate flow of concrete through and around the bolster 50.

FIG. 4 is an exploded perspective view of another embodiment 70 of the present invention. As seen in FIG. 4, a slab bolster upper 70 comprises a base 72 having a lower surface 74 and an upper surface 76, from which project a series of regularly spaced posts 78 having sockets 80 in their outer ends adapted to receive pins 82 formed integrally on short cap members 84 molded integrally with a central rib 86 formed on a rebar engaging cap 88. The latter, it will be noted, is provided with a series of regularly spaced transverse ridges 90. The posts 78 and a cap 88 with their associated, integrally molded joint element 80, 82 and 84, comprise a rebar support section 91 when assembled as seen in FIG. 5 of the drawings.

As shown in both FIGS. 4 and 5 of the drawings, at the juncture of each post 78 with the upper surface 76 of the base 72, longitudinally extending gussets 92 and transversely extending gussets 94 project upwardly from the upper surface 76 of the base 72. Along opposite side edges of the base 72 are a pair of longitudinally extending ribs 96, while medially thereof a third rib 98 extends parallel to the ribs 96. It will also be seen from FIG. 5 of the drawings that a series of voids 100 are formed through the base 72 while the spacing of the posts 78 provides further voids 102 defined by the posts, the upper surface of the base, and the cap 88, which voids comprise a major portion of the base and support section, respectively.

In all three embodiments of the invention thus described, it will be noted that the large voids, both horizontally and vertically, break up shear planes that would be created in the structure in which the bolster is embedded and contribute to cracking and weakness. The same function is also served by the longitudinally extending ribs with which all three embodiments are provided and the ridges 90 on the cap 88, which, although shown only in the embodiment of FIG. 5 of the drawings, are also applicable to the embodiments shown in FIGS. 1 and 3. While the embodiment of FIG. 5 is preferably of injection molded construction of various plastic material as noted above with respect to FIG. 1, the embodiments of FIGS. 1 and 3 may be extruded and all embodiments may be reinforced with a variety of fibers as also discussed above.

Up to this point, the slab bolster uppers of the present invention have been described as discrete units that would usually be used alone. However, in accordance with the present invention, any of the three embodiments discussed so far may be provided with complementary buckles on opposite ends to permit them to be joined with like units. For purposes of illustration, buckle construction will be described in conjunction with an embodiment similar to that of FIG. 5, although it will be apparent that the same buckle construction is equally applicable to the embodiments of FIGS. 1 and 3.

With reference, therefore, to FIG. 6 of the drawings, it will be seen that multiple slab bolster uppers 100 in accordance with the present invention are joined end to end with complementary buckle constructions 102, 104, 106 and 108. With reference also to FIGS. 7 and 8 of the drawings, it will be seen that the left end of each unit 100 is provided with upper and lower hasps, the upper hasp 110 being molded integrally with the cap 112, while the lower hasp 114 is molded integrally with the base 116. On the opposite end of each unit 100 are sockets 115 and 116, which are complementary with

and receive the upper and lower hasps 110 and 114. As will be apparent from an inspection of FIGS. 6-8, as the hasps 110 and 114 are inserted into the sockets 115 and 116, the projections 118 on the upper hasp 110 and 120 on the lower hasp 114 lock the hasps in place in their complementary sockets.

5 FIGS. 9-11 show a further form of complementary buckles for joining successive units of slab bolster uppers of the present invention. As seen in FIGS. 9-11, the complementary buckles 112 and 124 comprise a projecting member 126 receivable in the socket 128 on the opposite end of a like unit. A stabilizing portion 130 projects from the buckle 124 and is received in overlying relationship to the base of the slab
10 bolster upper for stabilizing effect.

 FIGS. 12 and 13 depict a slab bolster upper in a reinforced concrete structure. For purposes of illustration, the embodiment of FIG. 5 of the invention is depicted in FIGS. 12 and 13, although it will be apparent that any of the embodiments thus far described would perform nearly identically. A reinforced concrete structure
15 150, including concrete 152 containing aggregate 154 and reinforced with rebars 156 is shown in conjunction with a slab bolster upper 70. A plurality of posts 78 carry the rebar engaging cap 88 upon which the rebars 156 are positioned. Additionally, a lower surface of the base, 72 in FIGS. 12 and 13 is provided with projections 158 extending from the lower surface of the base 72 to space the base slightly above the surface of the
20 underlying form. As seen in FIGS. 12 and 13, this permits the concrete to spread beneath the lower surface of the base 70. Although the embodiment of FIG. 5 of the drawings is depicted for purposes of illustrating the projections 158, it will be apparent that any of the embodiments of the present invention may be provided with similar projections for the same purpose.

While the present invention has been illustrated by the description of an embodiment thereof, and while the embodiment has been described in considerable detail, it is not intended to restrict or in any way limit the scope of the appended claims to such detail. Additional advantages and modifications will readily appear to those skilled in the art. The invention in its broader aspects is therefore not limited to the specific details, representative apparatus and method and illustrative examples shown and described. Accordingly, departures may be made from such details without departing from the scope or spirit of applicant's general inventive concept.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS: